

THE BROKEN PITCHER.

The history of one known in early life, and who gave promise of much excellence, was accidentally recalled to my mind this evening, and, perhaps, the recital of some circumstances connected with this history may not be uninteresting or unprofitable, as they serve to show what apparent trifles sometimes give a bias to character for good or evil, and often color the current of a whole existence.

Mrs. Lerin was early left a widow with an infant daughter and a son of nine years, dependent on her for support. She had a little cottage of her own, and with the rent of a small spot of ground adjoining, added to the produce of her garden, she managed, by the practice of the strictest economy, to live quite comfortably. Edgar, her son, showed early a great love of books, and though uncultivated herself, and incompetent to direct his choice, she encouraged him in this, because their minister praised his studiousness and lent him books, and would often come and converse with him about the subjects upon which they treated, and it pleased her to hear how well he could talk. Her pride was also gratified by the complimentary remarks of visitors upon his sober, studious habits, and at their predictions that he would be something some day; and she had an indefinite idea that his books were, somehow, going to make a great man of him. And well might the widow be proud of her son, for in addition to the promise he gave of a mind far above mediocrity, he possessed uncommon beauty and symmetry of person, and much amiability of disposition. Besides caring for her little family, and attending to her garden, she found time to render occasional assistance to a neighbor—thus managing to keep her son at the little school kept by the minister, he rendering her all the assistance in his power, apart from his hours of reading and study. Things went on thus till Edgar had reached his fourteenth year, when the burden of his mother was increased by the death of a widowed sister, who left to her care an infant daughter, having no other relative to whom she could entrust it. As the infant came without any addition in the way of means, except the household furniture of her sister, the widow was more straitened than before; besides, with her additional cares, her health grew more feeble, and it was sometimes with difficulty she could perform her accustomed labor. Now the consequence of all this was, that she became fretful and irritable—annoyed by trifles which before had no power to disturb her, and by the law of reaction, this rendered other difficulties greater. Though a good housewife and an affectionate mother, this good woman had one fault, which was excessive particularity about trifles; and this, as is often the case, required frequent sacrifices of the comfort of those around, and led to many more serious faults—among them irritability of temper.

The cottage of the widow consisted of only two rooms below stairs, the kitchen and a little room in front, which served for parlor. This she had fitted up with some of her sister's furniture, and it was her especial pride. A neat home-

made check carpet of bright colors covered the floor; there were white curtains at the windows, and at one side a little table, covered with a cloth so white and ironed so smoothly, it looked like polished marble. On this, in summer, there was always a flower-pot, kept full of fresh flowers from the garden, and over it hung a small looking-glass garlanded with asparagus and flowering vines. Another flower-pot graced the mantel opposite, and the fire-place was filled with green bushes. Then, there were some shelves of books, and a lounge and easy-chair covered with green calico. I have described this room thus particularly, for it seems before me now—such a temple of neatness did it seem to me, when I used to stop there on my way to school, and was sometimes permitted to take a flower from the gathered ones that decked it.

Edgar used to love to retire with his book into this little room, and sitting in the easy-chair, or reclining on the lounge, realize in part the paradise of the poet Gray. His mother did not actually prohibit this, for he protested he could study so well no where else; the noise of the children and the opening and shutting of the doors in the common room interrupted him—the chambers were bare and unfinished—and he did not enjoy it so well. She had made up her mind that he must study somehow; so, though she manifested some uneasiness and apprehension, when he was in possession of her sanctum, and made sure his shoes were perfectly clean—for he did not seem to have inherited his mother's extreme carefulness—he was allowed occasionally to occupy it.

He was several times in serious danger of being deposed from his possession, from leaving the books scattered about, or from disarranging the lounge-cushions—for his mother was not sufficiently versed in the peculiarities of genius to console herself with the idea that disregard of the common laws of order and rule, is claimed as one of its distinguishing characteristics. One day, in trying to lower the looking-glass, that he might see himself, and regulate his gestures, as he recited a heroic poem that he was going to speak at school, he threw down the flower-pot—a pitcher much prized by her, because it had been the property of her sister—and broke it; the discolored water running over the table-cover, and from thence to the carpet. Besides, in falling upon it, he cut his hand in such a manner as to be unable to use it for weeks.

This was an outrage too great to be easily overlooked. He expressed much contrition, and promised greater carefulness for the future. But his mother was resolute, and he was banished his favorite haunt. She justified herself by the thought that it was only a whim of his; he could study very well somewhere else, and it was no use indulging him. So she told him he might study in his chamber or in the room with the rest of them; she could not run the risk of having everything spoiled. Edgar made at first some effort to study in his altered circumstances, but did not succeed very well; the thought of what he regarded as unkindness on the part of his mother, tending, also, to depress his spirits and to magnify the difficulties in his way. The injustice, too, with which he fancied he had been